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SOME PRINCIPLES OF ELIZABETHAN STAGING¹

PART II

Besides the objections against accepting alternation as the universal method of Elizabethan staging, there is another consideration which, though not absolutely excluding the possibility of alternation, suggests the existence of an entirely different practice.

Some plays, no matter how thoroughly proved alternation might be, could not be explained by it. Specific scenes from them have already been alluded to, but it is as complete plays that they present difficulties not easily to be solved. They illustrate a dramatic convention long since disused; never, indeed, fully recognized by modern students as existing in plays of the Shakespearean theater. This convention allowed the presence upon the stage of a property or furnishing which was incongruous to the scene in progress, and which, during that scene, was thought of as absent, though standing in plain sight. This incongruity took two forms: either the close juxtaposition upon the stage of two properties which in reality should have been a much greater distance apart, or the presence of a property in a scene where it could never naturally have been; as a tree, for example, in the midst of a room scene. It is directly in contradiction to our modern ideal of securing complete illusion and a perfectly harmonious stage picture. A stage with such incongruity could attempt no stage picture at all; it would rather by its properties suggest as by symbols the scene of action. That the Elizabethan stage could have been so unrealistic seems to us absurd and improbable, but the probability of this staging does not depend upon whether it would be acceptable to us. If pre-Elizabethan staging exhibited this same incongruity, if there were Elizabethan customs tending to create a similarly symbolic stage, the belief that such a stage actually existed in Shakespeare's time becomes, not absurd and impossible, but thoroughly reasonable. As to

¹ For illustration of the principle of staging described in Part I in connection with *Jocasta*, see Bapst, *Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre* (Paris, 1893), esp. p. 253; or (as earlier and better) the plate attached to *Il Granchio*, *Comedia di L. Salvati*. In Firenze 1566.

pre-Elizabethan conditions no special investigation is necessary, for Chambers in the *Mediæval Stage*, and Creizenach in his *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, in tracing the development of staging from the origin of the modern drama to the time of Shakespeare, have given ample proof that a similar staging, indeed, that the identical conventions, had existed for centuries. I do not attempt even to summarize the points which they make, but only to indicate briefly how the mediæval staging with *sedes*, "houses," etc., was closely related to the staging of these plays of Shakespeare's day.

When the drama began within the churches with the liturgical plays, there was, of course, no attempt to make a completely congruous stage picture. The sepulcher¹ of the Easter play and the crib of the Christmas play² were actually and more or less realistically represented, but only symbolically suggested the rest of the picture to the auditors. The action of the play might be before a cave, on the way to the sepulcher, in the city of Jerusalem, in Galilee, where the author willed, but the place of the play was always the church. Any complete stage picture was undreamed of. When the plays moved out into the churchyard and the market-place, they kept, as Chambers shows,³ their method of presentation much as it was. He prints a plan of the Donaueschingen passion-play dating from the sixteenth century, in which the *loci*, "houses," etc., are arranged as follows, beginning at the west (?) end—hell, Gethsemane, Olivet; Herod's palace, Pilate's palace, the pillar of scourging, the pillar of the cock, the house of Caiphas, the house of Ananias, the house of the Last Supper; the graves of the dead who arise, the three crosses, the sepulcher, heaven. The incongruity of this staging is, of course, marked, consisting especially in the close juxtaposition of widely separated places. When such plays, however, came to be played on stages with these *sedes* and "houses" crowded together as portrayed by the miniatures of the Valenciennes Passion,⁴ it amounted to the presence of properties in scenes where they were not supposed to be, and both forms of incongruity were illustrated. Heaven,

¹ Chambers, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 22 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 42 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 80 ff.

⁴ 1547; see Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature françaises*, Vol. II, p. 416; or Jusserand, *Shakespeare in France*, p. 63.

beneath it a hall, then Nazareth, the temple, Jerusalem, the Golden Gate, a square sea upon which rides a ship, hell mouth—all are crowded upon the Valenciennes stage at one time. This must have been the condition in any play of the mediæval type played in a limited space. Jusserand¹ comments on this sort of staging in the following way:

Plays being acted now within a small space, inside a closed building, "simultaneous scenery" was used. On the same canvas were painted in summary fashion and in close juxtaposition all the places where the events in the play were located: a forest was represented by a tree; the Lybian mountains, by a rock; Athens, Rome, or Jerusalem, by a portico with the name written above, as in the mystery mansions, as in Gozzoli's frescoes at Pisa, as on the English stage under Elizabeth, "'Thebes' written in great letters upon an olde doore" said Sidney.²

He also quotes³ a scene-shifter's description of the scenery used in a performance of *Pandoste* at the Hotel de Bourgogne, 1631, and reproduces the original sketches: "In the center of the theater there must be a fine palace; on one side, a large prison where one can be entirely seen; on the other side a temple; below, the prow of a ship, a low sea, reeds, and steps."⁴ This was for the first day. The second day of the play required "two palaces, a peasant's house, and a wood." This play and the Valenciennes picture, therefore, show much the same condition which occurs in the Elizabethan plays under discussion—places represented close together which really should have been miles apart, and properties incongruous to all scenes but the ones they were supposed to locate, these two customs uniting to make impossible any congruous stage picture.

In English dramatic history writers have emphasized the processional plays more than the standing plays; but Chambers mentions several which he thinks were not of the former type. So a series of London plays, traceable perhaps to the beginning of the sixteenth century, was "cyclical in character but not processional."⁵ The *Creed Play* at York was stationary, and was

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

² Lawrence (*Englische Studien*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, p. 41) writes to the same effect. Neither of these writers, however, suggests the survival of the custom on the Shakespearean stage.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 75.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 119.

acted in the common hall.¹ "The parochial plays," common throughout England, "were always, so far as can be seen, stationary."² The *Ludus Coventriae* Chambers thinks also a stationary play.³ Sometimes the play was actually on a platform, as at Chelmsford, Kingston, Reading, and Dublin.⁴ *The Satire of the Three Estates*, played at Cupar in 1535, was certainly a stationary play, and so was the Digby *Mary Magdalen*. In this latter were represented Mary's castle, perhaps at Bethany, Jerusalem, a stage for the devil with a place under it for hell, an arbor in which Mary lies down to sleep, Lazarus' tomb, and "Marcylle," which is separated from Jerusalem by a sea on which Mary embarks in a ship. There is apparently a rock in this sea, and a temple at Marcylle, though this is not quite so clear. Heaven seems an elevated place, to which Mary is raised; from it clouds and angels descend. The Cornish plays, given in circular playing-places, must also have been stationary; so was the Lincoln play of *Tobias*. The following passage in the town records shows its character:

1564, July: A note of the perti the properties of the staige played in the moneth of July anno sexto regni reginae Elizabethae, &c., in the tyme of the mayoralty of Richard Carter, whiche play was then played in Brodgaite in the seid citey, and it was of the storye of Tobias in the Old Testament.

The properties are described as follows:

Hell mouth, with a neither chap, a prison with a coveryng, Sara[']s chambre, a greate idoll with a clubb, a tombe with a coveryng, the citie of Jerusalem with towers and pynacles, the citie of Raignes with towers and pynacles, the citie of Nynyvye, the Kyng's palace of Nynyve, olde Tobyes house, the Isralytes house and the neighbures house, the Kyng's palace at Laches, a fyrmament with a fierye clowde and a duble clowde.⁵ Its cities, palaces, tombs, etc., since it was a "standing" play "played in Brodgaite," must have been used at one playing-place, and, in view of what we know of mediæval custom, simultaneously. In principle the staging could not have been very different from that represented in the Valenciennes miniature. Yet it was played in 1564, five years after Elizabeth began to reign.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 421. The division into separate pageants is due to the modern editor.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵ *Hist. Mss. Com. Reports*, XIV-VIII, pp. 57, 58.

Creizenach,¹ moreover, thinks that the "houses," etc., mentioned so frequently in the records of the Revels office were for plays staged after this same manner. So *ca.* 1571² *Lady Barbara, Effiginia, Ajax and Ulisses, Narcisses, Cloridon and Radiamanta*, and *Paris and Vienna* were furnished with "apt howses, made of Canvasse, fframed, ffashioned and paynted accordingly; as mighte best serve theier severall purposes;" 1579-80,³ a *History of the Duke of Millayn and the Marques of Mantua* was furnished with "a Countie howse a Cyttye;" a *History of Alucius*, with "a Cittie, a Battlement;" a *History of the Foure Sonnes of Fabyous*, with "a Citie, a Mounte;" a *History of Serpedon*,⁴ with "a greate Citie, a wood, a castell." Unless one supposes changes of setting, which would be difficult with such heavy properties, one must consider these plays as mediævally staged. But since they were presumably from the regular repertoire of the professional companies, these court presentations could not have differed greatly, especially in such fundamental matters, from the usual public performances of the same plays, and these records are, therefore, especially valuable not only as showing the existence in Elizabethan times of incongruous staging, but as leading to the inference of its existence on the popular stage of that time. *Thersites*⁵ also, Creizenach considers⁶ a play practically of the mediæval type. Here, then, is a direct line of English plays which were doubtless staged in the mediæval fashion, and which clearly bring the custom of the mediæval stage down to the time of Shakespeare.

Instead, therefore, of its seeming unreasonable and impossible to Englishmen to have incongruous properties on the stage, it was quite an accustomed thing, something they had long been used to. Preceding stage custom, the best possible justification and explanation of any dramatic convention, had sanctioned such staging practically since the origin of the drama. There were, moreover, numerous customs of the contemporary stage, partly

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 571.

² Cunningham, *Revels Accounts*, Vol. II, p. 13, Shak. Soc., 1842. I do not pretend to collect here from the accounts of the Revels all the information of value which they furnish concerning the properties and customs of the Elizabethan theater. That is a subject in itself deserving a separate discussion.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁵ Ward, 1537; pr. 1567, or later.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 540.

perhaps the result of this incongruous staging, but certainly similar to it in effect,—the creation of a symbolic rather than a picture stage, that is, a stage on which the properties are intended only to suggest the scene rather than to picture it completely, congruously, and realistically. Some of these customs have already been alluded to; for example, the unlocated scene. In all the Elizabethan plays these scenes are common. They contain no hint as to the place of the supposed action; they could be imagined as occurring anywhere. Everyone admits their existence; it is therefore quite unnecessary to discuss them at length. It is necessary, however, to notice how consistent they were with the symbolic stage, but how inconsistent with our own. The old-time audience, its imagination left for the moment unemployed, did not attempt to give them any specific background, but accepted them for what they were—unlocated scenes—merely noting the progress of the plot. Modern editors feel called upon to give each its proper setting—a street, a court, a hall, a corridor—as the fancy strikes them. On a stage where the stage picture is of dominating importance such scenes are impossible; on the symbolic stage they caused no difficulty whatever.

Another custom, almost as commonly illustrated as that just spoken of, is the change of scene before the eyes of the audience. Generally without the stage being cleared of actors, the supposed place of action suddenly shifts to an entirely different place. Creizenach¹ notes illustrations of this in Zeigler's *Infanticidium*, III, 1, and in his *Nomothesia* (1574), where a three days' journey is indicated by walking about the stage. The English craft-plays also furnish examples; for instance, in the fourth play of the Towneley cycle the three days' journey of Abraham and Isaac to the mount of sacrifice is indicated in twenty-six lines (139–65). Among the illustrations in Shakespearean times are the following:

Romeo and Juliet (quarto 2, 1599; 4, undated; folio, 1623), I, 4, 5. Romeo and his friends are at first before the house of Capulet, but with the direction, "They march about the Stage, and Serving men come forth with their napkins," the scene changes to the interior of the house.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 101.

Alphonsus (1599), l. 1102: The scene up to this point has been in the palace of Amurack. "Amuracke, rise in a rage from thy chaire" (1060). He banishes his wife, and as she is angrily leaving, Medea enters, and says: "Fausta, what meanes this sudden flight of yours? Why do you leave your husbands princely Court, And all alone passe through these thickest groues." The scene has changed before our eyes from the palace to a solitary place.

Dido (1594), I, 1, l. 120: The scene up to this point is not definitely located at all, but since it is between Jupiter, Venus, and Ganymede, one would naturally assume it to be upon Olympus. It certainly is not in the midst of a wood on the seashore near Carthage, where the action from that point on is situated.

Dido (1594), II, 1, l. 306: So far, the scene is in the hall of Dido. At this line it changes suddenly to a grove.

Antonio's Revenge (1602), II, 1 (in the Quarto this is divided into two scenes, but the stage is not cleared): Up to l. 17 the action plainly is in a church about the coffin of Andrugio; the latter part of the scene is before Mellida's chambers.

The illustrations so far advanced might perhaps be explained by supposing a curtain drawn at the point where the scene changes; but no such theory will make the following comply with modern ideas of dramatic congruity. In them the scene changes by the exeunt and immediate re-entry of the characters.

The Brazen Age (1613), p. 177: Hercules, having won Deyaneira, is going away with her when he meets Nissus, and then is stopped by a stream. Nissus exits to carry Deyaneira across the stream, which is thought of as off the stage. Hercules, rushing after him, shoots him with an arrow, and Nissus at once enters, pierced by the arrow, and we learn that the stage is now supposed to represent the other shore.

English Traveller (1633), IV, 3, p. 66: "Tables and Stooles set out; Lights: a Banquet, Wine." At the end of the banquet all the family retire to their chambers, but a guest, Geraldine, is left to rest on a pallet. He cannot sleep and decides to seek the room of his hostess. "He goes in at one doore, and comes out at another"; (p. 69). The scene, in spite of the continued presence of the pallet, and perhaps of the table, is now plainly in the cor-

ridor before the bedroom. He listens at the door, hears voices within, and decides to leave the house.

Old Wives' Tale (1595): The play begins in a lonely place: travelers who have lost their way meet a smith returning home; they approach his house with him. He says: "Come, take heed for stumbling on the threshold. Open door, Madge, take in guests." She enters and says: "Come on, sit down;" and the scene is supposed now to be before the fire in the cottage. Probably they knocked at one door, were greeted by the wife, went in, and then re-entered at another door, so indicating the change of scene.

Iron Age (1632), p. 379: The Greek soldiers are besieging Troy. "Now with a soft march enter at this breach," they say. "They march softly in at one doore, and presently in [out] at another." After this direction the scene is near the wooden horse, which stands within the city.

Sometimes the scene is changed merely by the characters walking about the stage, as it probably was in the illustration just cited from *Romeo and Juliet*. *Faustus* (1604), sc. 11: Faustus having astonished the emperor by his powers, says he wishes to go home, and that he prefers to walk "in this fair and pleasant green," rather than ride. By the end of the scene he is at home, and sits down to sleep in his chair. The 1616 version has no such confusion of place.

George-a-Greene (1599), ll. 1037, 1038. The shoemaker seated at his work sees Jenkins and picks a fight with him which is to occur at the town's end. "Come, sir, wil you go to the townes end now sir?" "I sir, come." In this interval they are supposed to go. The line continues: "Now we are at the townes end, what say you now?"

If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody (1605), p. 244: The scene opens with a great procession. "Queen takes state"—that is, she ascends her throne; after which she pardons her enemies and oppressors. When this is over, Elizabeth says: "And now to London, lords, lead on the way." "Sennet about the Stage in order," is the following direction. Then the mayor of London meets them, saying, "'I from this citie London," bring gifts.'

Sir John Oldcastle (1600), ll. 491–701: At the beginning the scene is before Lord Cobham's house (499); by 600 it is before an inn, and by 680, where the Aleman says, "You draw not in my house," it is within the inn, all without any clearing of the stage. In 902–1162 a journey to Lord Cobham's is similarly made. At 1008 the house is supposed to come in sight; at 1132 the action is before it.

Arden of Feversham (1592), III, 6: Arden is on his way to Raynum Downs. His servant's horse is lame, and the servant leaves Arden, being told to overtake him before reaching the downs. Lines 61–94 indicate the rest of the journey before the downs are reached.

Captain Thomas Stukeley (1605), ll. 120–335: An old man is going to Tom's chamber. He walks from an inn to the house of Stukeley, the scene being supposed to change finally to the chamber itself.

Sometimes, instead of the scene's shifting, the stage *at the same moment* represented two widely separated places. Creizenach, in discussing another point of mediæval staging,¹ gives the following which is applicable here: "Noch 1609, in der Widmung vor seinem *Paulus Naufragus* rühmt sich Balthasar Crusius, er stelle nicht verschiedene Orte zugleich dar und dehne das Theater nicht aus wie eine Landkarte."² This parting of the stage into different continents, this labeling of the doors, what is it but a modernization of the mediæval staging? Sidney's 'Asia of one side and Africa of the other,' Mayne's "the stage was still a stage, two entrances Were not two parts o' the world disjoin'd by seas," already quoted, show that the same thing was true in England. A typical illustration of this from the plays of Shakespeare is to be found in *Richard III* (1597), V, 3, where the tents of the two rival generals are represented upon the stage at once, and therefore of course much closer together than they could naturally have been.

A slightly different example occurs in *Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607, Queen's), p. 90. "Enter three seuerall waies the three Brothers; Robert with the state of Persia as

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 102.

² See also *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 101, 102.

before, Sir Anthonie with the King of Spaine and others, where hee receiues the Order of Saint Iago, and other Officers; Sir Thomas, in England, with his Father and others. Fame giues to each a prospectiue glasse, they seme to see one another and offer to embrace, at which Fame parts them, and so: Exeunt." Fame goes on to explain that each is in the country in which he was just represented, and the play closes.

A very similar scene occurs in *Eastward Ho* (1605), IV, 1. The scene is laid near the Thames at Cuckold's Haven. "Enter Slitgut with a pair of ox-horns, discovering Cuckold's Haven above"—probably a scene-board to that effect. He mounts a tree to leave upon it, according to custom, his master's tribute of the ox-horns, and from that height—either of a tree upon the stage or of the balcony—comments on what he sees. "And now let me discover from this lofty prospect," he says, "what pranks the rude Thames plays in her desperate lunacy." He sees a boat cast away and one of her passengers swimming; "his next land is even just below me." At these words Security enters and Slitgut greets him. Security exits and Slitgut again looks about him. He sees a woman swimming to shore at St. Katharine's and immediately the woman and a waiter in a tavern at St. Katharine's come on the stage below him and, acting their parts, are supposed to exit into the tavern there; Slitgut sees Quicksilver land at Wapping, and Quicksilver appears on the lower stage in a short soliloquy; then a party appears on the stage as at the Isle of Dogs; they meet Quicksilver, who a moment before was at Wapping, and a little later Security, who landed at Cuckold's Haven, enters to knock at the tavern in St. Katharine's. Finally, when all on the lower stage have gone, Slitgut descends with the words: "Now will I descend my honorable prospect; the farthest seeing sea-mark of the world; no marvel then, if I could see two miles about me." The tree or balcony was throughout the scene supposed to represent Cuckold's Haven, but the lower stage at the same time was Cuckold's Haven, St. Katharine's, Wapping, the Isle of Dogs, St. Katharine's, and then Cuckold's Haven again.

These examples of change of scene and of absolute simultane-

ity of scene show how greatly the Elizabethan stage differed from our own in its very conception and principle. It is plainly enough not a picture stage, but almost exactly analogous to the old stage of mediæval days. So far nothing corresponding to the "houses," etc., has been called attention to, but the juxtaposition of places far apart is plainly of frequent occurrence. The stage represents now this place, now that, without any division of scenes; or, even more boldly, this place *and* that at the same moment. Actors remain upon the stage, while it, like the magic carpet, shifts them about wherever the dramatist wishes. We are accustomed still to the convention of dramatic time by which we allow two hours to pass in ten minutes; or, in the act intervals, twenty years in a quarter of an hour. We have lost the very similar convention of dramatic distance, if one may coin a new term, which, no more illogically nor unreasonably, allowed two feet to represent as many miles, and annihilated space as the other does time.

The plays, however, do show exact parallels to the incongruous "houses." Percy's play, *Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errands* (MSS dated 1601),¹ does not differ in principle from the plays of the Middle Ages. Instead of hell, Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, represented by some sort of structure, Harwich, Maldon, Colchester are represented by labels displayed *simultaneously* upon the stage. When the scene was at Maldon, for example, the sign of Harwich was as incongruous and realistically improbable as the presence of Nazareth and Jerusalem on the same stage. All plays with scene-boards which represented different places must have offered similar illustrations. The only reason why the *Faery Pastoral* (MSS dated 1603) and *Aphrodisial* (MSS dated 1602) do not clearly indicate this same thing is because their scenes are laid in imaginary places where distance is unknown. The quotations from Sidney and Mayne must be a third time referred to, to remind the reader how long the custom of scene-boards continued; it will be noticed that it is not against the scene-boards themselves, but against this very matter of unreality, that both critics were contending.

¹ See the directions quoted in Part I of this study.

It may be objected that scene-boards are not real properties and do not correspond to the old "houses." One can allow incongruous signs more readily than incongruous settings. But the *Errands* with its ladder and its Image of Tarlton, and the *Faery Pastoral* with its chapel, kiln, cot, oak, etc., certainly show incongruous properties which cannot be disputed, and which would have spoiled the complete realism of the stage picture, had any been attempted. The scene already referred to in the *English Traveler* (1633), IV, 3, was also incongruously staged; for though the scene had changed from a dining-room into a corridor, the pallet on which Geraldine had slept must still have remained in sight. So in the scene of *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*. While the procession passed about the stage symbolizing the journey to London, the throne Elizabeth had used still remained in its place. Practically all the examples of clashes noted in the preceding discussion of the alternation theory could be used as proofs of this incongruous staging. The weaker the argument to prove that the doors and balcony were outside the curtains, the stronger is the evidence for incongruity of staging. If the doors and balcony were all on the rear stage, so that it could not be concealed while they were in sight, the following scenes, already described, must, for example, have presented incongruity:

Antonio's Revenge (1602), II, 1: The hearse of Andrugio certainly remained on the stage till the end of the scene, and would be an incongruous property when in the midst of the scene the place of action changed to the space before Mellida's chamber.

Wounds of Civil War (1594), V, 2: If the balcony was not outside the curtain and there was no pause in the play, the throne used in sc. 3 must have been on throughout sc. 2, even though the throne was the seat of Sulla at Rome and the scene was happening before Preneste.

David and Bethsabe (1599), I, 2: If the curtain did not hide the balcony and there was no pause in the play, the "spring" in which Bethsabe bathed must have remained on in this scene, before the walls of Rabath.

Probably these scenes are best explained by supposing the

alcove stage. There are scenes, however, in the old plays which the alcove stage will not explain, and which no assumed confusion or omission of the text will account for—scenes in which it is clear that properties were on the stage during scenes to which they were not at all suitable.

Tamburlaine (1592), IV, 2: The scene is described as before Damascus: "Now may we see Damascus' lofty tower" (l. 102). Tamburlaine orders Bajazeth brought forth and makes him serve as his footstool: "Tamburlaine get up on him to his chair" (l. 30). Though the scene is clearly out of doors in the open country, an elevated regal chair is nevertheless introduced without comment or explanation. Similar scenes occur in *David and Bethsabe*, II, 4, and *Wonder of Women*, V, 2.

English Traveller (1633), IV, p. 79: The scene is outside a house. A number of gentlemen, in order to entrap Reignald, a servant who has been deceiving them, "withdraw behind the Arras," says the direction. Whether this arras were the curtain or not, whether it was open or drawn across the stage, it certainly was not a suitable furnishing for a street scene. Such incongruity must have existed in practically every scene where the stage was supposed to represent anything but a room, for the curtain in every out scene was ever present.

Titus Andronicus (1600), I, 1: We have become accustomed to this scene from its presence in Shakespeare; but what is the congruity of having a private tomb represented in the same scene as a meeting of the Senate? It only shows that, in the matter of dramatic convention, custom and not reason dominates. Whether we should so lightly pass over the incongruity of this scene if it were actually represented on our picture stage is doubtful.

Sapho and Phao (1584), IV, 3: Sapho, presumably in bed, and her maids tell each other their dreams. At the end Sapho orders them to "draw the curtaine." The maids are not directed to go out. Scene 4 is at the shop of Vulcan where he and his men make the arrows for Venus. There is no direct demand for a forge, but something, it seems, must have been used, since the making was plainly acted upon the stage. Bond supposes the

forge to have been behind the curtain; when the curtains were closed after sc. 2 the room furnishings may, it is true, have been removed, and the forge setting put in their place, the curtain being opened in sc. 4 when the making of the arrows began. Act V seems to continue without a break, however, Venus and Cupid continuing upon the stage. Venus says she "will tarrie for Cupid at the forge," while he goes to Sapho—a remark useless and meaningless unless the forge is on the stage and she actually does remain by it. Venus continues to wait for Cupid into sc. 2, which is in Sapho's chamber again, until finally, in the middle of the scene, she detects Cupid in Sapho's lap. Yet the forge has not been removed. The next and final scene of the comedy is before the cave of Sybilla. Clearly, if a forge existed—and if it did not, why the useless speech of Venus?—it was on the stage at the same time that the scene of action was in Sapho's court. If there is anything at all in the "clashes" of properties—that is, if the performance was continuous—and if anything represented the cave, it also must have been upon the stage during the same scene, and, since it is used frequently in the play, perhaps was on during the whole performance.

Parasitaster (1606), IV, 1: Bullen says the scene is within the palace. Gonzago enters in full state. But at l. 638 Dulcimet, his daughter, says: "Father, do you see that tree, that leans just on my chamber window?" Line 650, she says to him: "To Dulcimet's chamber-window A well-grown plane tree spreads his happy arms." Line 700, the Duke says to Tiberio: "This plane tree was not planted here To get into my daughter's chamber." This sounds very much as if an actual tree were intended, though it need not necessarily be on the stage. But the next act shows that it probably is. The action of V, 1, obviously in the same scene, is told sufficiently in the directions: "Whilst the Act is a-playing, Hercules and Tiberio enter; Tiberio climbs the tree, and is received above by Dulcimet, Philocalia, and a Priest: Hercules stays beneath;" (l. 128) "The Duke enters . . . and takes his state;" (l. 145) several people "lead Cupid to his state;" (l. 461) "Tiberio and Dulcimet above are discovered hand in hand." In short, a tree and a throne were both on the

stage at one time, the scene being supposed to be *at once* the inside and the outside of the palace; or, to state it more exactly, nowhere at all, because no scene, no background, was conceived of.

The Brazen Age (1613): This highly spectacular play, surprising as it is in its demands upon the staging, was performed upon a public stage, or, if not performed, written by Heywood, an experienced playwright, who would not absolutely violate theatrical custom.¹ The objection that the *Brazen Age* is too much like a masque to use it for evidence of popular methods does not apply either, for it was played, if played at all, in a popular playhouse and must have conformed to playhouse customs. There could have been little difference anyway between masques and popular plays in such fundamental dramatic conventions as these. If anything, the masques, appealing to the cultured and critical audience at the court, would have been the more realistic and the less likely to use this staging under discussion. Any illustration of it from the *Brazen Age* gets therefore added force from this consideration as well as the later date of the play.

Act 5, sc. 3, is as follows: Scene 2 was at Omphale's, where the Greek heroes have come to rouse Hercules from his effeminate captivity. He goes to make a vow at Jove's altar, Omphale remaining in soliloquy. Scene 3 begins with: "Enter to the sacrifice two Priests to the Altar, sixe Princes with sixe of his labours, in the midst Hercules bearing his two brazen pillars, six other Princes, with the other six labours, Hercules staies them." Lychas brings him, as in the familiar story, the poisoned shirt, and Hercules puts it on. "All the Princes kneel to the Altar." Hercules is seized with agony and goes out raging, the others except Lychas following him. Hercules returns directly to Lychas and kills him. The scene meanwhile must have shifted, for Omphale says:

¹ That these plays of the Ages were probably performed the following quotations show: In "To the Reader" of *The Golden Age*, Heywood says: "This is the *Golden Age*, the eldest brother of three Ages that have aduentured the Stage, but the onely one yet that hath bene iudged to the Presse." *The Brazen Age* is in its address to the reader called "the third brother," but has no mention of acting. "To the Reader" of *The Iron Age*, after speaking of the *Gold, Silver, Brass, and Iron Ages*—the last in two parts—continues: "Lastly, I desire thee to take notice, that these were the Playes often (and not with the least applause) Publickly Acted by two Companies, vpon one Stage at once, and haue at sundry times thronged three seuerall Theaters, with numerous and mighty Auditories." Though "these plays" could refer to the two parts of *The Iron Age*, this is, as Ward says (Vol. II, p. 578), quite improbable. All four were probably given on the stage.

"Beneath this rocke where we haue often kist, I will lament." "Enter Hercules from a rocke aboue, tearing downe trees." Hercules kils Omphale with a peece of a rocke," and appeals to the Princes to help him in his agony. "All the Princes break downe the trees and make a fire, in which Hercules placeth himselfe." "He burnes his Club, and Lyons Skin." "Iupiter aboue strikes him with a thunder-bolt, his body sinkes and from the heauens discends a hand in a cloud, that from the place where Hercules was burnt, brings vp a starre and fixeth in the firmament." A report comes of Deyaneira's death and at the command of Jason to "take vp these monuments of his twelue labours", the princes exeunt, bearing off the pillars, which in spite of the change of scene from temple to open wilderness, have remained upon the stage. Even if this play were not performed, Heywood obviously writes it with the stage in mind: the conventions it illustrates are those of the stage, and one of those conventions is certainly that of incongruous properties.

These are not all the possible examples of scenes where a property is upon the stage during a scene to which it is unsuitable, but they are the best and clearest I have found. Other plays, however, illustrate the incongruous staging in another way. Suppose a play shows in several scenes scattered through it the use of the same property or setting, which is heavy or for some reason difficult to fix in place. Or suppose a property so used is small and unobtrusive. Is it not reasonable to suppose, in view of the fact that incongruous properties were allowed upon the stage, that these plays illustrate such a usage? Some examples have already been given: the tree in the *Parasitaster* used through acts IV and V; the cave, if one existed, in *Sapho and Phao*, referred to in II, 1, 2, 4; V, 3; the lodge, etc., of the *Faery Pastoral*; the ladder of the *Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errands*; and the labels of the same play. *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590) has hung up through most of the play the arms of the Three Lords, for they are all alluded to again and again (pp. 378, 403, 458, 473, for example). The scene does not change very much, almost approaching to a classical type of staging, but certainly does a little; and in these scenes the arms were incongruous.

The Case is Altered (acted 1599), III, 2, is another example of the small unobtrusive property. Jacques in this scene hides his gold in a hole in his yard and covers it with horse-dung. Scene 3 is at Ferneze's house; IV, 1, 2, are in the same; in sc. 3 Juniper is in his shop singing, presumably on the rear stage; but sc. 4 is the same as III, 2, with the pile of horse-dung undisturbed as Jacques left it. To imagine that it had remained there all the time is not difficult, and, in view of the other illustrations presented, perhaps it will not be too much to suppose that the tree into which Onion climbs had also been on the stage throughout the intervening scenes. Since the shop scenes almost certainly, and the house scenes, very probably, were on the rear stage, the tree and dung would be both on the front stage, and incongruous during those scenes.

Alphonsus (1599, but written 1589?): This play is an illustration of incongruous staging, if any property for woods existed. It is one of the plays which go far toward proving that such a property did exist, for it so uselessly, and yet so consistently, alludes to it. It is easy enough to see why a dramatist, when a plot imperatively demands a background of woods, might put in lines referring to them, even though no real setting was employed; but when the imagined situation does not require woods, or when it is actually out of keeping with the presence of woods, such textual allusions can be explained most naturally by supposing that some such setting actually existed, and that the textual allusions perhaps arise from its presence upon the stage.¹ Scene 1 is practically unlocated, but in it Venus, whom the stage directions bade to "stand aside," comes forth saying: "From thickest shrubs dame Venus did espie The mortall hatred which you ioyntly beare." (92, 93). In sc. 2 Carinus bids farewell to his son Alphonsus, and says: "Meantime Carinus in this sillie groue Will spend his daies with praiers and horizons" (179, 180).

In II, 1, Alphonsus overcomes Flaminus, the usurper of the

¹ The proof for wood settings, though not absolutely convincing, is stronger than that for almost any other property, the existence of which must be established from the plays alone. It is too long to be given here, but will be discussed in a later paper on Elizabethan properties. Brodmeier admits their existence (p. 65). If they existed, they took sometimes the form of separate trees, for in a large majority of cases a single tree is used as part of the wood scene.

throne, and bids one of the nobles bring back his army "Into this wood" (455). Though this is not the same wood as that in sc. 2, nor probably that in sc. 1, the setting seems the same. But in the midst of the scene is the direction, "Alphonsus sit in the Chaire;" and the place of action seems quite uncertain. Near the end of the scene Laelius leads in the soldiers spoken of before, and says to them: "Let vs lurke within the secret shade Which he [Alphonsus] himselfe appointed vnto vs" (699, 700).

Act III, sc. 1, is before Naples, but requires either chairs for three kings or one long seat. Sc. 2 is at the Turkish court, and since the scene is one of ceremony and Amurack is certainly sitting, it is possible that "chaire" means a throne. After the visitors are gone, Amurack—his wife Fausta and his daughter sitting at his feet—falls asleep, and Medea conjures up visions before him, Colchas rising up through a trapdoor "in a white Cirples [surplice] and a Cardinals Myter." The visions concern the fate of his daughter, and Amurack describes them in his sleep. They anger his wife, who wakes him. "Amuracke rise in a rage from thy chaire." He banishes her, but (the direction is addressed to Fausta) "Make as though you were agoing out, Medea meete her and say, 'Fausta, what meanes this sudden flight of yours? Why do you leaue your husbands princely Court, And all alone passe through these thickest groues.'" Fausta replies: "No toy . . . nor foolish fancie ledde me to these groues." The groves and chair were on the stage at the same time; probably the grove remained on through all the play, or at least to the end of this act.

Two Lamentable Tragedies (1601): This play tells in alternating scenes the story of two murders, one in London, the other in Italy. The London story uses two shops. If anything besides the doors represented the two shops—and it is necessary to see into both—it is not easy to imagine that the shops were taken off during each scene in Padua. Perhaps labels above the doors and signs were all the furnishings; but even then incongruity would result.

Alexander and Campaspe (1584): Bond¹ supposes the tub of

¹ Vol. II, p. 545.

Diogenes brought on and carried off each time, this being necessary sometimes in the midst of scenes. It is much simpler to imagine the tub on the stage all the time, and that it was supposed included in the scene of action only when alluded to.

Wonder of Women (1606, Blackfriars): This play has already been alluded to several times, once to prove that the doors were not concealed by the curtain. I believe that the evidence of the play shows this statement to be true; but if it does not, and if the doors did open on the rear stage, the result is to make the staging only more incongruous than ever. The principal illustration occurs in the third and fourth acts. Act III, sc. 1, is in the palace of Syphax at Citra. He is trying to compel Sophonisba to yield to him, and enters, dragging her in. She finally feigns consent, only stipulating that she be allowed to offer a private sacrifice. He gives the desired permission, but leaves behind him Vangue, his slave, to watch her, and bribes her maid Zanthia. "Enter under the conduct of Zanthia and Vangue the solemnity of a sacrifice; which being entered, whilst the attendants furnish the altar, Sophonisba sings a song." She sends away all but Vangue and Zanthia, and, making Vangue drunk, "They lay Vangue in Syphax' bed and draw the curtains." Then Sophonisba escapes through a vault which leads from the bedchamber to "a grove one league from Citra." Syphax enters immediately, and, "offering to leap into bed, he discovers Vangue," whom he kills, and then, sending Zanthia before him, he goes through the vault in pursuit of Sophonisba.

So far all is congruous enough. If the curtains referred to are those of the rear stage, the door presumably, the trap and the altar certainly, are on the front stage. If only bed curtains are intended, all, so far as yet appears, may be on the rear stage. Sc. 2, however, begins with the direction: "Enter Scipio and Laelius with the complements of Roman Generals before them. At the other door, Massinissa [the husband of Sophonisba] and Jugurth."¹ This mention of the doors shows that the doors cer-

¹ It may be objected that all the rear-stage furnishings might have been removed while the curtains were closed, and the curtains again opened for sc. 2. But the succeeding scenes make this unlikely. Of course, if one wished to suppose even sc. 2 played with the bed, etc., in view, the doors may have opened upon the curtained space. This, however, would only add another example of incongruity—and throughout this argument I am endeavoring to accept every possible objection and to limit myself to unmistakable illustrations.

tainly were outside the curtains, but does not make clear whether altar and trap were or not. The scene is unlocated, and is only eighty-five lines long.

Act IV opens at the other end of the secret passage. "Enter Sophonisba and Zanthia, as out of a cave's mouth." From the textual allusions this is clearly in a forest. One may doubt, however, that any wood-setting was used, since this is the only scene in the play requiring it. Yet if the theater had such a setting for other plays, perhaps it was used here also. Syphax enters soon after Sophonisba, and, once more failing in winning her, sends her away. Then he summons up a witch, Erictho, who promises to put Sophonisba in his power by means of charms. When he sees Sophonisba approaching his bed, he is to say nothing and have no light by. While Erictho is off the stage working her charms there is much music, among other directions indicating this being: "A treble viol, a base lute, etc., play softly within the canopy" (l. 201); then "Enter Erictho in the shape of Sophonisba, her face veiled, and hasteth to the bed of Syphax." After a short speech, "Syphax hasteneth within the canopy, as to Sophonisba's bed," and the act closes.

Here three things are noticeable: first, the change of scene without clearing the stage, with the sudden reference to a bed in the midst of a wood scene; second, the use of the term "canopy" as if the bed were concealed behind it; and, third, the position of the trap outside the canopy. The "canopy"¹ seems equivalent to the curtains of the rear stage. Yet the use of incongruous properties here is not as yet illustrated, unless one assume a wood-setting on the front stage, for the bed was concealed by the curtain, and the curtain, so commonly incongruous in out scenes, may for the moment be disregarded.

Act V continues the action from the point where Act IV left off. The direction reads: "Syphax draws the curtain," certainly from within, "and discovers Erictho lying with him"—perhaps this is the bed curtain. "They leap out of bed." "Erictho slips into the ground as Syphax offers his sword to her." Syphax

¹ This term seems used with a similar meaning in other plays; e. g., Percy's *Faery Pastoral*, "Lowest of all over the Canopie ΝΑΗΑΙΤΒΟΔΑΙΟΝ or Faery Chappell. In V, 5, characters went into this chapel and "seated themselves both."

kneels at the altar cursing when "Out of the altar the ghost of Asdrubal ariseth."

The altar was near the trap, probably in front of it, so the ghost could seem to rise from the altar; the trap was outside the canopy, as we saw in the preceding act; therefore the altar was also outside the canopy or rear-stage curtain. It would hardly have been removed from there during Act IV, and, if not, would in that scene have been an incongruous property. Why should it have been removed? This incongruity would not have disturbed anybody, for in V, 2, where the scene is a battlefield, there is a textual allusion, "Seize that hill," and the following directions; "Scipio leads his train up to the mount;" "Scipio passeth to his throne." A battlefield with a throne is no more incongruous than a wood with an altar.

The Old Wives' Tale (1595, Queen's): The stage in this play was either the alcove stage, with the alcove arranged as a study, or a stage of one of the other types, with a door or a structure for the study. The study was probably concealed by a curtain (p. 343, where Delia is discovered sitting asleep). In front of this curtain, but, if one chooses, behind the regular stage curtain, stood a large cross and a well (some arrangement of the trap), in no way associated in the play, and perhaps not on the stage at the same time; there was also, near the study or cell, a turf which concealed a glass holding a light. There were on the stage, probably all of the time, a table, chairs or seats of some kind, and perhaps a wood-setting. That the study, the cross and the turf, and the study, the well and the turf, were on the stage together, though the study and the well, and the study and the cross, are not supposed to be related at all, is shown by the following scheme of properties:

Pp. 309-13, cross; 314, interlude by harvest men; 314-18, cross; 318-22, study, turf, and light, probably a table; 322-26, cross; 327, song by harvest men; 327-31, before the cell or study; the turf and light; 331-36, well, before the study; 336-39, table; 339-41, the well; 341-47, before the study, the turf and light, the trap.

How were these plays staged? The simplest and most reasonable answer seems to me to be that at the beginning of the play

all the heavy, naturally immovable properties to be used throughout the performance were in place, either on the front or rear stage, whichever one thinks more probable; or, better, with some on the front stage and others behind the curtains. In the *Old Wives' Tale* perhaps the well-setting was not put on until p. 327 during the song, since it was not necessary until after that point. Plays in which any property was used but once probably had it placed behind the curtain, where it could be quickly and easily arranged, discovered, and removed to make way for the next. Properties like beds or banquets were, when circumstances forbade the use of the rear stage or its convenient arrangement, brought on and carried off at the point where the action demanded. But properties, either difficult to move, like the well in *Old Wives' Tale*, or so small as to be unobtrusive, like the turf and light, were, when once brought on, left upon the stage as long as they were to be used, even though some scenes intervened to which they were inappropriate. As each of them was to be noticed by the audience some allusion was made to it in the text or it was used in the action; otherwise it was not thought present any more than the Elizabethan gallants seated around it.

It may be objected that this solution is not the only possible one, that there are very few illustrations cited, and that the whole is too unreasonable to be accepted. On the contrary, this incongruity is more reasonable than the logical and harmonious alternation staging. It would be strange indeed if the mediæval customs, which the studies of Creizenach, Chambers, and Jusserand show to have continued down to the time of Elizabeth, had suddenly been obliterated. It would be stranger still if, in the midst of such incongruities as the use of scene-boards and the change of scene within a scene, absolute congruity in regard to properties should have existed. Instead of the incongruous staging being unreasonable, it is, from the point of view of history, the most reasonable of all. It is not fair to attempt to force the plays into other forms. Of course, by assuming that, in the *Old Wives' Tale*, for example, the cross was removed at the end of each scene in which it was used, and replaced again at the beginning of the next scene in which it was required, the incon-

gruity can be explained away. But why should one do so? The scenes from *Tamburlaine*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Parasitaster*, *The Brazen Age*, etc., cannot be so explained; *The Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errands* cannot by any scheme be made other than incongruous; dramatic distance, and change of scene within scenes, surely existed. Merely because our notions of propriety do not allow such things now is no reason for denying them in the past. It is true that there are comparatively few examples; if there had been many, they would not so long have escaped observation. The large number of lost plays, moreover, especially of this earlier period, must not be forgotten. For one illustration still existing, there may originally have been a dozen. It is also necessary to notice that of existing plays only a very few are at all definite as to their staging, and that, the more circumstantial and precise the directions, the more the traces of incongruous staging. If the inconclusive plays had been published with complete and specific directions, the chances are that our list of examples would be doubled. I have used as my tests of incongruity the presence in the same scene of incongruous properties, and the recurrence in a play of a property not easily moved or too small to be much in the way. This is a severe test, a situation which few plots would be likely to bring about. There are probably other manifestations of mediæval custom on the Elizabethan stage which we know nothing of and which we have as yet no means of detecting. There are other plays, such as *Dido*, *Histriomastix*, *Love's Metamorphosis*, which I think furnish examples when tried even by these tests, but which are not certain enough to be cited as evidence. In view of these considerations, even the few illustrations assume an importance out of proportion to their number. The fact that the plays from which they are drawn vary widely in date, in author, and in place of production, renders them all the more valuable and makes the proof of the existence of an incongruous staging on the Elizabethan stage as sure as any proof on such a subject can be.

One may almost say, indeed, that it is the only theory of staging which could have been true of the Shakespearean theater. That theater could not, in the very nature of things, have had a

picture stage: the shifts of scene just alluded to forbade it; the spectators seated upon the stage forbade it; the ever-present curtain as a background for all front-stage scenes forbade it. If the dramatists had attempted to secure perfect realism, they would have been bound to stricter rules than the Greeks. The chorus was liberty itself as compared with these conditions; for the chorus could be of any city and of any time; the Elizabethan stage audience was always Elizabethan and the scene must always have been London. The very strictness of the bonds compelled them to be broken, and the stage for the playwright of Shakespeare's day was necessarily only a platform upon which his characters stood, while the scene was anywhere his fancy dictated or his plot required. The properties did not picture the background, they only suggested and symbolized it.

This conclusion explains several things in connection with the plays. The curtain, so necessary in the view of the alternationists, becomes of secondary importance, and one understands why there are so few directions for it. Possibly not many more rear-stage scenes occurred than the directions definitely indicate. One understands, too, why there are so few directions for the use of properties, though the textual demands are more numerous, and though we know that the stage was furnished with fair completeness. If they were put in place at the beginning of the play and remained throughout the performance, directions concerning them would be useless. For example, the table, which seems so often assumed as present, probably was present most of the time, standing out of the way in one corner when not in use, and, when desired, brought into the center of the stage. Perhaps, too, this custom explains the number of textual allusions to properties: these allusions were possibly inserted, not to take the place of properties, but to indicate which, at the moment, were to be noticed. This, however, could not have been very necessary. There is no reason for supposing that a large number of properties ever crowded the stage. *The Old Wives' Tale* and the *Faery Pastoral*—the first with its cross, well, study, and turf; the second with its kiln, cot, oak, and well—are certainly more crowded than most of the plays.

Certain opinions concerning the Elizabethan theaters are confirmed by this incongruous staging. One of these is not, however, that which pictures the Shakesporean audience as primitive and childlike in imagination. That they accepted such an unrealistic staging was a result, not of any peculiar quality of their minds, but of their education and previous dramatic experience. It does not show that they were lacking in a desire for realism in their stage productions. Hardly a page of the accounts of the office of the Revels, which arranged the court plays, but shows how strong this desire was. But the desire for realism seems to have been concerned more with the individual properties than with a realistic general setting. In every consideration of the Elizabethan theater the fact must be remembered that it was not an illusion, a picture stage, but that it was largely symbolic. From that point of view, its body of stage customs is complex, but reasonable; from any other, it is absurd and inexplicable.

The opinion, often expressed, that the poetry of this drama was largely owing to the conditions of its production is in a measure true. The stage was certainly fairly provided with furnishings, but creating little scenic allusion, could not adequately create "atmosphere," and it became the task of the poet to do the work of the scene-painter. Not so much by description of the actual imagined setting—that would only increase the incongruity—but by the general tone which the poetry gives, Shakespeare and almost all the early dramatists strove to illumine their symbolic stage.

As the symbolic stage increased the task of the dramatist by requiring that he supply the background which it could not, it at the same time gave him greater freedom. Many have called attention to the influence in this way of the triple stage; the incongruous staging certainly increased it also. Because of this freedom, the drama was able to deal with many subjects no longer considered possible to it. The constructive importance of acts and scenes seems almost to have been unobserved; almost every scene began with an entrance and ended, not with a situation, but with an exit, binding the whole play into one connected story; while in many cases the plot was not dramatic, but

rather a history, a novel, or a romance told in dialogue. *Tamburlaine* is such a play; so are most of Shakespeare's historical plays. They begin at the beginning, and they tell the whole story with all its details. It is useless to attempt to fit them into the dramatic strait-jacket of exposition, climax, and resolution. What is obviously true of these plays is probably true of many others. One may be permitted to question whether it ever occurred to most of the dramatists that there was such a thing as dramatic construction in the sense in which we understand it; and to doubt if there is much advantage, except a possible pedagogic one, in striving to make their plays comply with this modern theory. Rather, theirs was a narrative art, and their subjects were often narrative subjects. They dealt with these subjects as a novelist does, giving the smaller points as well as the greater. Often the plays lack any dominating conflict, but are rather a series of dramatic situations clustered about some single figure. To say that this was all a result of the stage construction and stage customs would be extreme and untrue, but their influence must have been great. In its fulness of treatment of the story, in its narrative rather than its dramatic art, in its greater range of subject, the Elizabethan drama shows the influence of the Elizabethan stage.

Which of the four forms of staging—the simple method of the early days, the classical method of *Jocasta*, the alternation staging, or the incongruous—was most prevalent, is a question which must, in the very nature of things, remain open. The classical form could not have been very common, for the plays in their frequent changes of scene would not allow it. The others seem rather to have been used together than in any separate and carefully distinguished way. *The Old Wives' Tale*, for example, may have changed during the outer scenes the study of Sacrapant into a place where Delia is discovered asleep, so illustrating the alternation principle; but the previous presence of incongruous properties shows the staging of the play to have been symbolic also. Absolute tests for both alternation and incongruity are lacking; it is therefore impossible to give any definite answer to the question opening the paragraph. But if the question be

varied to ask what is the relative frequency of apparent confusion and consistency, some answer may be attempted. For as these changes of place within the scene, this dramatic distance, this incongruity of properties are all confusion from our point of view, so alternation is consistency and orderliness. This is, indeed, one of the arguments against it. What chance was there for orderliness or consistency, such as the alternation theory demands, on a stage where there was so much confusion and incoherence? The alternation theory really means an approach to the modern notion of an harmonious stage picture. There was no chance for the congruity it demands, unless one grant the existence of the alcove rear stage. In that case it is conceivable that the Elizabethan theater presented a stage at once modern and mediæval in its customs. By 1603 the mediæval customs were not gone out of use; the symbolic use of properties, incongruity, the convention of dramatic distance, still existed. But on the rear stage, if we are not compelled to suppose every scene using the door, the balcony, or properties, as behind the curtain, there may have been presented a congruous stage picture, especially if the rear stage were not too large to be furnished with fair completeness. Even in the *Wonder of Women*, for example, the rear stage could then in every important detail have represented a bedroom, and though the altar, the throne, even the trees perhaps, were all in plain sight on the front stage, in mediæval fashion, the rear stage would nevertheless be coherent and harmonious in itself.

If this was actually the case, and complete realism was once really introduced even in a few scenes, it is easy to see that the tendency would be to make all the play similarly realistic, and that the mediæval customs would gradually disappear. This would be true because the people were naturally fond of realism and delighted in it, and because men like Sidney and Jonson, accustomed to classical unity and propriety, were already objecting to the old incongruity.

But it seems to me impossible to trace, during the strict Elizabethan period at least, any marked decay of mediæval custom. The illustrations which I have cited date from the last

years of the period quite as often as from the earlier years. Only two cases showing elimination of incongruity are known to me, and they may be purely fortuitous.¹

Plays really illustrating these incongruities may, of course, from our imperfect means of detecting them, pass unnoticed, and other forms of incongruity may also have existed of which we know nothing. Perhaps a critical study of all the plays produced between 1559 and 1642 would show more clearly the way in which the mediæval customs were lost in the modern, but that is outside my present inquiry. All I am attempting to show is that in 1603 the English theater still exhibited in the apparent confusion of its staging traces of mediæval influence.

"Apparent" confusion, however, for the incongruous staging is incongruous only so long as we insist upon looking at it from a modern point of view. If we once fully admit that the Elizabethan stage was hardly more than a platform for acting and not a mimic world in itself, the performance of a play with "incongruous" staging becomes no more incongruous than is the performance of a modern public reader. Genée² and Kilian³ have both noted the symbolic nature of the Elizabethan front stage, but they have not noted, or have indeed denied these farther proofs of symbolism—the scene-boards, dramatic distance, incongruous properties, etc., the very customs which make the recognition of symbolism most necessary and most important. To insist upon the modern point of view as regards the staging of the old plays is, of course, to make them seem unreasonable and absurd. So long as editors continue to introduce into the old plays their own misleading divisions into scenes and their own

¹ *Faustus* (1604), sc. 11, shows a shift of scene which the 1616 version avoids. *James IV* (1598) has two sets of act interludes. One set (printed by Manly between each act) indicates exits at the end of each interlude, and the references to "our harbour" (351), "our sell" (369), suggests that Oberon and Bohun concealed themselves in the tomb mentioned in the Induction. This tomb would thus be an incongruous setting during the scenes of the play itself. The other set (printed by Manly, p. 351) allows the supposition that Oberon and Bohun remained in the balcony throughout the play observing the action, since there is no hint that the two went off at the end of each interlude. If the tomb were actually so used in the former set of interludes (and this is doubtful), and if the gallery were the place of observation in the other set (and this is doubtful, too), the second set would make unnecessary an incongruous property. In neither *Faustus* nor *James IV*, however, is it at all certain that the versions showing incongruity represent the earlier form of production.

² *Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 139 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 231.

meaningless location of scenes, so long will the plays seem chaotic and unintelligible. But as soon as they are considered from the point of view of the symbolic stage, there is hardly an extant play which does not in its staging become reasonable, coherent, and effective. The actual restoration of the Elizabethan stage is probably neither possible nor desirable; most modern audiences, seeing one of Shakespeare's plays presented as in his day, would in all probability be only confused and irritated. Perhaps the unset front stage may still prove advantageous in Shakespearean productions, but the old customs of scene-boards, sudden shifts of place within scenes, incongruous properties, etc., are probably lost forever. But, if lost to the stage, they are not necessarily lost to the closet, and as readers, if not as spectators, of the Elizabethan drama, we can still see it as it was and not as modern conditions make it appear to be.

I have in this discussion endeavored among minor matters to make clear the existence of scene-boards, the existence of three stage doors, and the probability of the existence of an alcove rear stage, though also insisting that no one form of stage was universal or exclusive. In more general topics I have attempted only to show that the advocates of alternation, in founding their speculations on too narrow a basis and on an as yet unproved, if not improbable, idea of stage-construction, are using tests contradictory to each other and sometimes certainly untrue; that, in consequence, the theory has been supposed to apply where it certainly does not, and its importance overemphasized; that Elizabethan stage custom, instead of being the simple, essentially modern thing the alternationists would make it, was a complex growth, uniting with some realistic methods elements of incongruity similar to, if not derived from, those of the mediæval stage; and that, if we would secure a proper idea of the Elizabethan drama, we must abandon our modern notions of stage propriety, and read the old plays from the point of view of the symbolic "incongruous" stage.

GEORGE F. REYNOLDS.

SHATTUCK SCHOOL,
Faribault, Minn.